Nature God Law

Nature

God

Law

PAPERS
OF
SHAKERS
48

Shakers
N.Y.
Canaan

Nature. God. Law.

Nature.

What is Nature? or What do I mean by Nature?

My definition of Nature is: That primitive, uncreated, atomic or monadic matter, necessarily & unavoidably always was & is; and that therefore, as such, in some form or other, matter is eternal. And that there is a power either essentially inherent in matter, or has been infused into it by that great Supreme Intelligence we call God, which, by its irresistible motion, causes actions, or operations upon or within inanimate and animate substances, always in accord

and consistently with itself; never varying in the least to accommodate some other or outside influence; but with more swiftness than atmospheric air can enter a vacuum, will shape itself to the changing causes that are continually arising, and will produce precisely corresponding effects.

This power is perpetually, & will eternally be, in motion; and _that_ always in the most strict agreement with Truth, according to the specific and peculiar nature of the thing acted upon, whether _un_sentient or sentient; and cannot possibly, by any power outside itself, be caused to operate differently. _This_ I call _Nature_. It has no intelligence; it has no rationality; it has no responsibility; nor has it any motives, intentions, plans, or _will_. It is never wrong, because it is always consistent with itself.

It is present, and is the same, in all terrestrial worlds. Its influences & operations are clearly seen, from the most inci-

pient form of mineral & vegetable, through all the multitudinous varieties of plants and animals, up to the perfected physical human. For it is at the embryon of all things, and will continue its operations, in the production of pain, as well as pleasure; as long as any matter shall exist upon which for it to operate; and that will be forever.

Nature supplies all things and living creatures with the means of subsistence, and with power to be and live. Instinct, or more properly, an inferior & very limited degree of intelligence, causes all sentient creatures to find their necessary food, and to discern between the kind intended for them, and that which is not intended for them; and they inviolably keep within the bounds which in this respect are set for them, and which prohibits their touching the forbidden things; and they always act in harmony with their own peculiar natures, in taking such things only as are congenial & suitable

for them. Thus they are preserved from an immeasurable amount of suffering which, otherwise would necessarily come upon them. Therefore, by Nature, and by their own instincts, by which they are bounded, & over which they cannot pass, animals are largely protected in the enjoyment of life.

But with mankind it is otherwise. — They can, & do, and apparently will continue to, overstep the boundaries of their almost infinitely-superior degree of intelligence, and seemingly try (as it were) to break down and destroy the inherent tendencies of Nature, which always operates in their favor, that is, for their good.

By their trespasses, however, they only turn the course of Nature in some other direction, in exact agreement with their doings, or misdoings, whether through willfulness or ignorance on their part. For Nature makes no distinction between accidents & premeditated deeds. A person who should accidentally fall into deep water, would as

assuredly drown, as if he intentionally threw himself in. So, if a person, by accident, sever an artery, he will as certainly bleed to death as if he intended to destroy his life.

Mankind eat & drink, & otherwise do such things as cause Nature, which can be only true to itself, to produce in them pain, wretchedness, and premature death. They, moreover, use their bodies for such unlawful purposes as necessitates Nature to produce diseases in million-form variety, shortness of life, and miserable deaths; instead of health, pleasure, and long life.

And Nature being inexorable in her demands & penalties, there is nothing, in earth or heaven, that can save human beings from suffering, or prevent their misery, while they continue to invent, increase, & adopt for their practice, causes which, in the very nature of things, can produce nothing else than the cruel effects which, with keen & bitter remorse, they doom themselves to endure.

There is no possible remedy for them. No Church, no prayers, can save them from the effects of their own created causes of their misery. God will not forgive them. There is no Christ to atone for them, and destroy the effects of foregoing causes. For it is not their business to stem or oppose the course of Nature. It is more than ten thousand Christs can do. They have no will in that direction.

And even well-disposed physicians, while they feel pulses, look at tongues & eyes, administer poisonous & other drugs and emetics, apply leeches, blisters, enemas, & lancets, and take the money of their deluded patients, do but little else for them than increase their misery, by inducing other causes of distress & anguish, till death comes to the rescue of the poor sufferers, and thus end their physical torment.

There is, I repeat, no remedy, except what is in the power of more particularly those persons who possess entire control of their own bodies. For the rest of mankind, there ap-

pears to be no effectual remedy that can be reached by them; nor will there be, till they come into circumstances wherein they can be as free as free-agents ought to be, and were intended to be, and will be, when their condition and character shall have become so perfectly good, that they will need no outward, coercive restraints, to keep them from violating the laws of health and life, physical and spiritual.

The only remedy for any one, is to create entirely new causes, by living according to the laws of hygeine, dietetics, and cleanliness; and entirely abstaining from all exciting, intoxicating, and benumbing narcotics, spices, & compounds: such as alcohol, tobacco, opium, and the abominable quackeries and nostrums, called Specifics, Panaceas, &c. &c. These new causes will create new and very different effects; for Nature will be true to itself, and will operate to the production of a new physical state, to the destruction of pain & wretchedness, to the lengthening of

life, and to the production of much real comfort, pleasure, and contentment.

If water would only *sometimes* wet other things; or if fire would only *sometimes* burn that which is combustible, we should be very badly off, and should greatly complain.

Why then sh'd mankind fret & murmur because *Nature* is true in *all* its operations upon other things; such as wrong habits of life, in eating, and drinking, and dressing, & even worse disease- & death-producing practices, in those who indulge themselves therein.

Brethren & Sisters, let *us* be wise, and lay fast hold of the protection & beneficence that *Nature* holds in her hands, with which to possess and bless every one of her true and faithful adherents with health, vigor, and comfort of both body and mind.

God.

This subject has, in all ages, been a theme for many a writer, preacher, and philosopher, who have in vain tried to give a proper definition of the term, as applied to the great Fountain and Source of all Beings.

Some say, God is intelligence diffused through, or permeating all matter and space, so that He, or it, is to be seen in every thing; and of course, by this rule, every thing is God. This I call Pantheism.

To some others, God is an undefinable, shapeless person, who, outside creation, arbitrarily controls all Beings & things. – This I call a Myth.

To some others, God is no person at all; but is the concentration of all principles, and consequently is simply principle, without substance or form, which is merely a Nonentity. This I call Atheism. (See p. 22)

Many millions of others have con-

cluded, that God is composed of three distinct male personalities, each equal to the other in duration, wisdom, power, and goodness; and all without a beginning; yet one of them they call Father, the second they call Son, and the third, they say, is a procedure from the other two; a "Trinity in Unity." This I call a Triple Monstrosity of the imagination, well calculated (if not to destroy) to considerably damage the intellect of all who believe therein.

Some others think, and say, that God is One. That is, that there is One Being only (whom they call Father) who is properly entitled to the distinguishing appellation of God, who does whatsoever He will, and governs all things & Beings exclusively according to his own power, wisdom, & goodness, arbitrarily enacting, adopting, and enforcing laws for the government & benefit of his creatures in all worlds; a male; and yet that from Him have proceeded all Beings in all worlds, and in all

heavens — the true & only Creator of all things.

This I call dry Unitarianism, or Deism, which, instead of the comfort & satisfaction which the subject — God — should yield to believers therein, supplies them with cold, metaphysical, critical, speculative, abstract Rationalism, (so-called) with mental controversies, and uninspired reasonings upon such things as neither warms the soul, nor produce conviction of sin; nor provides any spiritual remedy for souls who are hungering & thirsting after righteousness.

Another class of religionists thinks that God is a great man, filling all space, (although they say that, to Him, there is no space), and receives into Himself Beings who shall occupy his arms, & legs, & body, and head, &c, which form the various divisions of the numerous orders of intelligent Beings in the Spiritual & angelical Spheres of the Heavenly Domain of God. They also believe that Jesus Christ is the very God who fills this immense space, and that

there is no God beside Him. These are called Swedenborgians, who, although they hold to some stirring truths, yet, to a rational & understanding mind, some of their ideas of God appear very imperfect and absurd.

Some others say, that God is Father and Nature is Mother. These are mostly Spiritualists. Now, between these two there is no correspondent affinity. Therefore it is a perfect absurdity to place Nature in juxta-position with God the Eternal Father, and then call her, or it, his Counterpart, or the Mother.

Who would think of placing an intelligent man within the sphere of Nature, and then, without a correspondent female intelligence, expect offspring from it? Yet this is just what these persons do with God the Father. Is it not perfectly obvious that, if there be offspring at all — especially intelligent, rational, & responsible offspring — there must be a Mother

with precisely the same nature as, & perfectly corresponding with, the Father?

Still another, and much larger class, including the whole of Christendom, and all the Jews, believe that the Jehovah of the Bible is the Universal God of heaven & earth — the Creator of all things & Beings.

Now, this cannot be true; for he certainly was not the God of Jesus Christ, who never mentioned his name. And it is evident that many of his laws & precepts were entirely set aside by Jesus Christ, who introduced a diametrically opposite code for the regulation of the lives of his followers.

Jehovah was merely a tutelary God, or Guardian, of the Jewish people, in things which pertained almost wholly to their physical life. He was a powerful Spirit — "a man of war;" and taught and inspired his people to fight in the most relentless, cruel, and bloody manner. He

gave instructions for their marriages, procreative habits, private property, &c. &c; and therefore could not have been "the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," the "Prince of Peace," who lived and taught a virgin life, and community of property; and who is immeasurably superior to Jehovah.

Numerous other ideas of God have been and are being held up to the mental gaze of different portions of poor purblind humanity; but I pass them by, to give my own imperfect views upon the subject, which possibly may meet a response of approval in the minds of some to whom they are or shall be presented.

But let me first premise, that it is utterly impossible for any one in this mortal state (or perhaps in even any angelical state) to have so perfect a conception of the Infinite God, as to be able to give a proper, clear, & full definition of that most wonderful & marvellously-incomprehen-

sible Being of all beings; and even if it were possible for an Archangel to define God, it is very doubtful whether our present condition of mind could receive the impression intended to be made.

I believe that God, the uncreated and Eternal Fountain & Source of all light, life, and goodness, is a necessarily self-existent and all-perfect Intelligent Spirit, and is the focal Centre of his entire Universe of spirit and matter. — But nevertheless, He is not that metaphysical abstract monotony which knows no development. It is as necessary for Him to develop, as it is for Him to exist. His nature, indeed, is always the same; & it is his nature to be always developing. And, although He is the Life of all life, whether mineral, vegetable, animal, or spiritual, yet the spirit of his Intelligence, and Rationality pervades only those subsistences to whom He has

given the high & distinguishing quality of being (like Himself) for ever in existence, and for ever developing & increasing.

These emanations, or creations, of God, from the highest Order of Intelligences, down through all grades of his responsible creatures among mankind, (if living in harmony with his will,) are the true habitation & dwelling-place of the Spirit of God. In them He lives, as the innermost of their being; by them He creates; and, as He develops, so does He cause them to develop and increase in his nature. For, necessarily, the life-giving Source and Eternal First Cause of all intelligence, rationality, and responsibility, and of all organized male and female Beings, must itself, or rather Himself & Herself, also be living, intelligent, rational, responsible, and organized Beings, possessing illimitable goodness, power, & wisdom, and an all-conquering will; and can do whatsoever they will, in any and

all parts of their inconceivably-immense
Domain of spirit and matter.

This Eternal & Infinite Dual Spirit is now revealed or made known to us as Male and Female, or as the Heavenly Father and Mother of all Creation, inanimate & animate. That is, they control, use, & shape all the elements of matter & spirit in their entire Universe, to the purposes of their conjoint will and wisdom. And, while it is difficult, or even impossible, to comprehend the essential nature and mode of life of these self-existent, unoriginated Spirits, yet it is not so difficult to understand the attributes and properties of Father and Mother.

And the soul that is rightly affected, and whose intuitional faculty has begun to develop in purity and goodness, will soon be given to interiorly know the will and the power of the Father, and the motions, influences, and tender drawings of the Mother; and may also feel the felicity & blessedness

resulting from a true Gospel union with those who are laboring (by a spotless life of holiness & unselfishness) to glorify those conjoint Heavenly & Eternal Spirits.

The <u>aggregation</u> of pure angelical Beings, who continually see and glorify God, with their large mental and spiritual faculties and capacities, <u>form</u> what I will call a <u>Spiritual Reservoir</u>, filled with Divine goodness, (including, truth, love, wisdom, joy, &c) or with the emanations of this Dual God, for the life & happiness of all his intelligent creatures everywhere. Its dimensions encompass all globes and planets, and all the heavens; and its depth is absolutely unfathomable; so that there is enough of heavenly goodness in store for <u>each</u> in all worlds; enough for <u>all</u> in all spiritual & heavenly spheres; and enough <u>for evermore</u>.

This Reservoir I will call <u>God in diffusion</u>. It flows out, in perennial streams, from Angelic Intelligences, to all

spiritual Beings, in all worlds & heavens,
who desire to live & increase in godlike goodness. And in proportion to the purity of the recipient, so in that proportion, each one possesses his & her amount of intuitional knowledge of God; and hence, when such engage in worship and praise to Him, it appears, to them, as if they were really adoring, in their presence, the Divine Dual Personality of God our Father and Mother, without any intervening medium. For, to such, the Divine presence appears to be immediate, and intensely sympathetic. This makes their worship delightful & heavenly; and without any doubt is acceptable to God. Why should it not be so?

And these outflowings of the Divine nature gladden both Angels, justified saints, and honest repentant prodigal humans. For these elements of spiritual life and heavenly felicity are so pure and subtil, and the Angel Mediums thereof are so ready and quick to minister them, that they necessarily

easily reach the soul that has rendered itself (by confession, restitution, repentance, and reformation) a true & fitting recipient thereof.

Thus we see that <u>God</u> <u>must be personal</u>, or there is no God to whom to pray, nor any to answer prayer; no God to adore and worship; and no God to bless us. Impersonality — <u>Principles</u> — cannot respond, cannot hear, cannot answer, cannot bless; can hold no fellowship — no communion.

As <u>Nature</u> has the control of, & operates upon, within, & through all <u>matter</u>; so God controls & operates upon, within, & through all <u>mind</u>; and even makes <u>Nature</u> itself subservient to his use & purpose. And in proportion as Intelligences partake of the life-giving streams of the <u>Reservoir</u>, in that degree they resemble their Eternal Parents in righteousness, purity, love, & bliss. So that, by increasing in these elements and principles of <u>God</u>, till born into the Divine

nature, they will really become like God — "sons and daughters of God" — of the same substance and life as their Heavenly Father and Mother.

This is what Jesus actualized in this world, and therefore, without any hesitation, called himself the Son of God; referring the people to their own Scriptures: "If he called them Gods to whom the word — the substance and life — of God came, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?" And it is stated, that he gives to his followers "power to become sons" and daughters "of God;" indeed, in a limited & subordinate sense, Gods.

Jesus achieved a victory over his nature, and subdued it to the will of God within him; and acted as God over all his own inferior animal qualities and proclivities; and that is what his followers are called to do and to be — Gods over their

human & animal natures & tendencies — to govern them, and bring them into entire subjection to the power, wisdom, and will of <u>God</u>, whose authority is set up in the soul. <u>This</u> is evidently the ultimate and glorious destiny of the finally faithful — <u>to be</u> <u>Gods</u>. "I said Ye are Gods."

This will make us fit companions of Angelical Christ Beings, each of whom is in the <u>stead</u> or <u>place</u> of the Supreme God, to those to whom <u>they</u> are sent to minister of their pure and heavenly natures.

"There are Gods many." "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

(<u>For p. 9.</u>)

Such persons do not consider that there cannot possibly be a collection of principles, or indeed <u>any principle</u>, where there is <u>no person</u>.

Law.

Law appears to be the principal — most potent — element in Nature. It is not arbitrarily placed therein; but is an inherent & essential property thereof — part of itself, as eternal as itself — in fact, is itself.

No one can do anything with, or act upon, matter, in any manner or form, but what Nature has a law for the same, and will make it manifest. Therefore all should beware not to transgress; for her penalties for infractions are immediate, and without any respect to persons, circumstances, or conditions; and must be paid in full. — Yet Nature's protection & blessing will always be with those who will, to their utmost ability, obtain & retain, & practise, the knowledge of her conserving and salutory laws at all times, and in all places.

Illustrations here would be superfluous & useless; for all, I think, must

feel the truth & force of the above statements.

Now, if unintelligent Nature always acts according to Law, then it can be easily believed, that the all-wise and intelligent God does nothing arbitrarily; but always necessarily acts in perfect harmony with the Law of his own Being: any departure therefrom by Himself, would undeify Him. But such an event is absolutely impossible.

God is so pure, good, and perfect, &, as to his existence, is so completely independent of all other Beings, that it is very doubtful if any human can really sin against Him, in the true & proper sense of the term. All that appears to be sins against Him, are merely violations of spiritual, moral, & physical laws against ourselves or our neighbors; and it is not possible (unless the mind has be-

light there will be darkness; for comfort there will be sadness & disconsolateness; and for spiritual life and happiness, there will be condemnation, and death to that which is good.

It may safely be believed, that no one will ever attain to the angelical condition, without strict & continued obedience to the inherent, necessary, and increasing Laws of God and Nature, as from time to time shall be made known or revealed to our interior spiritual beings; and especially when they shall be impressed upon our understandings and consciences.

It is Law, Law, Law, of God and Nature; not arbitrary, but essential Law; inviolably kept all the way through our probation, in this world and the next, that will secure to us the perfect bliss of heaven. Nothing else will do it. God Himself cannot absolve or release us from the necessity of obedience thereto; for He has created

Law-abiding followers of Jesus Christ and Mother Ann, who shall faithfully hold out to the end.

It is *solid work*; and the reward will be *solid* and lasting—yea, *everlasting*.

W. O.

William Offord

The foregoing production (by W. O.) was written expressly for, and read at, the *Social Gathering* of the three Young Believer Families, at Canaan, on Wednesday, August 21st, 1872.

Mt. Lebanon, July 22/73.

To Dr. Dixon.

Dr friend, not knowing whether you received my communication of April last, for James Burns, I have now written to him direct; and inform you that, with this I have inclosed another Article for "H. N." to him, instead of to you, as it will save time, and perhaps be some convenience to you; although I should have liked you to have seen it before it is published. But you are sure to see it. I have received the No. for July; for which, please accept my grateful thanks, and continue sending.

"Volckman's Essay" has many good points in it. ("Parental Succession," pp. 325 to 329, is very good; but who will practically adopt it? None but those who are very near being Shakers; for it is one of the principles of Christ — of the kingdom of heaven.) But it is very doubtful if the rich owners of the land will ever part therefrom, or from much of their other wealth, voluntarily. The manner in which they obtained it, and the tenacity with which they hold it, have made their tenure somewhat volcanic; and I think it is not im-

Mt. Leb. &c. July 22/73.

Friend Burns, Inclosed is an Article in reply to the wish of "A. Gardner", in the June No. of "H. N.", for a definition of "Moral Philosophy," which I shd be glad if you wd publish as early as convenient. I think it wd occupy (in Brevier) abt 8pp; but the kind of type I leave to you, of course. In April last, I sent an Article, entitled "The Attractions of Matter & Spirit," to Dr. Dixon, to be handed to you for publication in H. N. but do not know whether it ever reached you or him. I shd however, be very glad to know that it has been received. And, if received, I hope it will find a place in the above periodical. I shd also be gratefully obliged, by your sending me 3 or 4 copies of each Article for use. Or, if that cannot be, please be so kind as favor me with a copy of the Nos. in which they may respectively appear.

Truly & respectfully yr friend,

William Offord.

To James Burns, Publisher, &c.

(Turn over.)

likely that the time will come, when a revolutionary bursting will take place, before they will ever consent to do any good therewith. Before I came to America, I saw and said, and still think, they are murderers

Friend Burns,

If you will be so kind as favor me, by handing or forwarding the inclosed few lines to Dr Dixon, 8, Gt, Ormond-st, you will greatly oblige the writer, Wm Offord.

Of course you are at perfect liberty to read them.

Being in my ~~oth~~ eighth decade, it is not likely that I shall be long before I shall be in the spirit world, when & where, if I can find you, I will square accounts with you and the doctor, & some others. (This last par was written in phonography.)

at large."

I wish success to every philanthropic effort to benefit others; yet I fear & doubt whether the philanthropists of the Volckman type will succeed in bringing the realization of their Owen-like sanguine hopes.

If they really wish to have a better system than now prevails, I would recommend them to do as did Jesus: that is, begin with a few. Let as many of them as can be found of one mind & heart, begin at once to possess & occupy land, for the benefit of the people, and invite all who need and desire it, to be partakers of the benefits, subject, of course, to such wholesome & equal regulations as shall be adopted by the projectors. Then they may possibly increase in numbers and ability; and will at least have the satisfaction of knowing they "have done what they could." But they will find, that Selfishness — that great omnipresent Monster, — will oppose their wisdom and goodness. Yrs respectfully

Wm. Offord.